

Training the “Grand Army of the Public Schools”:
Teaching Patriotism in the Progressive-Era United States

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In New York City on May 1st, 1899, “Flags were in evidence everywhere.” Patriotic citizens filled the city’s streets in honor of the one-year anniversary of a key American naval victory in Manila. The public schools brimmed with national pride for this “entirely informal” celebration, and as the *New York Times* claimed, “the school children probably made more of the day than their elders.” Indeed, according to this report, every school district in the city put on elaborate patriotic exercises. “In Public School No. 23,” the *Times* reported, “the majority of the children are foreign born, but they are intensely patriotic. The exercises yesterday morning began with the singing of a number of patriotic songs. After this some of the scholars read descriptions of the naval battle and other short sketches of the life of Admiral [George] Dewey.” Following their principal’s brief speech about Dewey’s exploits, “the color guard, composed of little girls dressed in white, brought out the National flag, and as it passed the children rose and saluted the colors amid loud cheering.” Throughout the city, schoolchildren — native-born, immigrant, male, and female — all celebrated a new national military hero: George Dewey. The elaborate fetes that marked “Dewey Day” show that public schools contained ample amounts of nationalist zeal by the end of the nineteenth century. Cultivating this patriotic fervor, however, required proper training.¹

In the late-nineteenth century, reformers and policymakers across the nation worked to make schools a training ground for loyal patriots. These efforts resulted in several state laws requiring patriotic exercises and the presence of national symbols in schools. This movement garnered substantial popular support and helped create a national “cult of the flag.”² The success of these efforts, however, relied on the compliance of school administrators, and most vitally, teachers. In order to ensure educators eagerly enforced patriotic standards, popular publications

¹ “Admiral Dewey Honored,” *New York Times*, May 2, 1899, 3.

² Stuart McConnell, *Glorious Contentment: The Grand Army of the Republic, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 207-208.

framed teaching patriotism as a means of lessening threats to teachers' authority and as a way to enhance their political and social standing. Teachers attempting to cultivate civic pride among the nation's youth, however, did so using the materials a generation of reformers, academics, and self-proclaimed patriots produced in hopes of instilling students with what they deemed desirable American values.

Teachers across the nation disseminated a patriotic curriculum rife with militarism, a celebratory view of American history, and the cultural assumptions about gender, race, ethnicity, and religion that dominated turn-of-the-century American thought. Millions of American schoolchildren received this instruction through patriotic rituals, manuals, and history textbooks. This entrenched a distinct patriotic culture in the schools sanctifying national political heroes, symbols, and myths.³ In emphasizing the vitality of the nation's martial spirit, furthermore, patriotic education nurtured both students' love for their country and their willingness to fight for it. Ironically, an overwhelmingly female and working class teaching force played a vital part in inculcating these values. Teachers effectively became drill sergeants charged with training a national patriotic army.

The decidedly militaristic nature of patriotic education had profound consequences for students and teachers. Historians have noted that militarism increased in the late-nineteenth century because of middle- and upper-class white male concerns about modern civilization's

³ The growth of racialist thinking in the nation corresponded with a surge in immigration from southern and eastern Europe. For some examples of this see Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), 94-95. For examples of this ideology at work in the patriotic education movement, see McConnell, *Glorious Contentment*, 209-210. These ideas also stemmed from the nation's involvement in the Spanish American War, a key catalyst for the patriotic education movement. For examples of this, see Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 171-186. For an additional discussion of the importance of masculinity in promoting the Spanish-American war, see Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998). Civil War reunion also played a considerable role in these developments. See David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War and American Memory* (Cambridge: University of Harvard Press, 2001), and for the growth of sentimentalism toward Confederate history, see Edward Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 327-340.

enervating and emasculating effects. Militarism also suggested a way to revitalize American manhood and unify a nation still divided by the Civil War.⁴ Furthermore, the martial principles of discipline and duty, many argued, provided a logical way of ameliorating existing social problems.⁵ While historians have noted that elite male reformers invented and disseminated these martial ideologies, women's prominent role in the patriotic education movement suggests that they also promoted and helped entrench this culture. Indeed, white middle- and working-class women constituted a majority of the nation's teachers and wrote many of the patriotic manuals and texts used in classrooms. Similarly, rather than simply deferring to the authority of male administrators, many teachers accepted patriotic education as a way to enhance their own social standing. For teachers struggling to gain influence and respect among both their employers and the public, embracing militaristic ideals perhaps offered greater promise than did adhering to the strict notions of piety and purity espoused by the era's Victorian female reformers.⁶ Teachers embraced the mythology promoted in patriotic education as a way to gain increased respect in a culture dominated by increasingly militant upper class white men. Women had no place in the American military, but they could play a key role in preparing a grand army of the public schools.⁷

⁴ T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994 [orig. 1983]), 98-117.

⁵ Kevin P. Murphy, *Political Manhood: Red Bloods, Mollycoddles, and the Politics of Progressive Era Reform* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 68-73, 102, 103. Murphy notes how the principles of what he deems "civic militarism" gave male urban reformers a masculine tool with which to attack political corruption, poverty, and social injustice.

⁶ Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 4.

⁷ This turn of phrase evokes the Grand Army of the Republic, a key patriotic organization that plays a considerable role in the growth of the patriotic education movement and the establishment of legal standards. For studies that offer examples of the Grand Army of the Republic, the state, and the national media's role in promoting patriotic education, see Cecelia Elizabeth O'Leary, *To Die For: The Paradox of American Patriotism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 186-193; McConnell, *Glorious Contentment*, 207-210, 224-234; Wilbur Zelinsky, "O Say, Can You See?: Nationalist Emblems in the Landscape," *Winterthur Portfolio* 19, No. 34 (1984), 280.

Despite the often-mandatory presence of flags, national holidays, and patriotic celebrations in schools, teachers faced an increased responsibility to mold a loyal citizenry in the Progressive Era.⁸ Popular publications played a key role in aiding this process, and their attempts to frame patriotic education as beneficial to both teachers and students helped spread this movement. These materials, however, emphasized the themes of militarism, Civil War reunion, and a glorified American past in their efforts to stimulate teachers' zeal. Similarly, high school textbooks attempted to cultivate patriotism among students using similar themes. These materials reveal a vital aspect of the patriotic education movement: how teachers and students encountered and learned to interpret proper patriotism. As patriotic education's ardent supporters claimed, the specific iteration of patriotism teachers learned to inculcate held the potential to regenerate American schools and society alike.

An advertisement in an 1898 edition of *The Youth's Companion*, a patriotic magazine intended for schools, envisioned a striking sight: "If it were possible for the FOURTEEN MILLION PUPILS of our public schools to march in single file, the line would extend over FIVE THOUSAND MILES." This example intended not merely to illustrate the scope of public school attendance in America, but rather how easily mobilized students could be if they received a thorough patriotic education. An important key to creating patriots in the nation's schools, the article noted, was *The Youth's Companion's* decade-long campaign to place a flag atop every schoolhouse in the nation. These flags, the article contended, played a vital role in "arousing public sentiment and creating interest in the subject of a better citizenship." This notice implied,

⁸ The amount of schools with flag laws was publicized in "School Flag Laws," *The Youth's Companion* 79, No 15 (April 13, 1905), 182. For a look at some of the earliest examples of flag laws and states' additional requirements, see Albert Gray, "Notes on the State Legislation of America in 1895," *Journal of the Society of Comparative Legislation* 1 (1896 - 1897), 235. For a discussion of these legislative shifts in public education and efforts at social governance in the schools, see Tracy L. Steffes, "A New Education for a Modern Age: National Reform, State-Building, and the Transformation of American Schooling, 1890-1933," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2008), 3-11. For a look at how social governance functioned in the Progressive Era, see Michael Willrich, *City of Courts: Socializing Justice in Progressive Era Chicago* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

in imagining all of the nation's schoolchildren marching in single file, that displaying national symbols in schools could produce a militantly patriotic citizenry. While the mere presence of national symbols had the potential to create eager patriots, the article claimed that they needed some additional direction. "One of the most important questions discussed by educators," according to both this notice and countless other concerned public figures, was "how shall this grand army of the public schools be trained in order to ensure an intelligent, loyal and upright citizenship [?]"⁹

As this question implied, patriotic education played a significant role in efforts to reform schools as a way of ensuring social order. Reformers and public officials sought to ensure an efficient and unified society by creating a patriotic citizenry, but the burden of inculcating these ideologies in the nation's youth fell to school administrators and teachers.¹⁰ Teaching had only recently become an overwhelmingly female occupation. Prior to the Civil War, men held a majority of the nation's teaching positions. By 1870, however, women made up roughly sixty percent of the nation's teachers, and by 1930 this number grew to eighty percent. The number of female teachers in primary grades was even more skewed. A 1905 study of 467 American cities reported that men constituted only two percent of elementary school teachers. Men occupied

⁹ "...In Training for Citizenship," *The Youth's Companion* 72, no. 4 (January 27, 1898), 50. Emphasis in original.

¹⁰ For examples of belief in popular education solving problems of social organization and thereby hastening progress, see Rush Welter, *Popular Education and Democratic Thought in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 215. For an example of the school as a site where private organizations targeted in order to address what they viewed as broad social ills, see Jonathan Zimmerman, *Distilling Democracy: Alcohol Education in America's Public Schools, 1880-1925* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 1-12. For how educational reforms affected teachers and administrators, see Diane Ravitch, *The Great School Wars, New York City, 1805-1973: A History of Public Schools as a Battlefield for Social Change* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 103-113, 234; James W. Frazier, "Agents of Democracy: Urban Elementary-School Teachers and the Conditions of Teaching," in Donald Warren, ed., *American Teachers: Histories of a Profession at Work* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1989). An examination of the lasting cultural legacy of educational reforms is offered in Zimmerman, *Whose America? Culture Wars in the Public Schools* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

thirty-eight percent of high school teaching jobs, but still, women held a considerable majority. At the same time teaching became a largely feminized profession, however, it began receiving increased scrutiny from reformers. Historians of education have argued the years between 1880 and World War I witnessed the low point of teacher influence in schools. In cities throughout the nation, mostly male officials attempted to create uniform standards and centralized control, a system historian of education James Fraser describes as “characterized by a commitment to a kind of efficiency and top-down decision making which often took on a decidedly antiteacher tone.” Concurrent to these threats to their authority, popular publications framed patriotic education as a way for teachers to establish an identity as vital and even heroic community members.¹¹

Patriotic instruction represented a vital but underdeveloped aspect of public education to many critics. Academics and administrators often complained that teachers inadequately promoted these ideals, constituting another threat to their already waning authority.¹² By embracing patriotic education, however, teachers responded not only to critiques, but also to the potentially elevated social status they could gain by molding loyal citizens. Based in Massachusetts, *The Youth's Companion* played a key role in the patriotic education movement, and placed considerable emphasis on what teachers stood to gain by promoting patriotism. Teachers faced a new set of expectations due to the widespread influence of the patriotic education movement.¹³ Although this shift placed an additional burden on teachers, it also offered promise. Popular publications framed teachers' duty to bolster patriotism as an aspect of

¹¹ Fraser, “Agents of Democracy” in Warren, *American Teachers*, 119-120, 125, quote on 126.

¹² Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 18-19.

¹³ For instances of how patriotic education brought teachers under increased scrutiny, see, for instance: Lys D'Aimée, “The Menace of Present Educational Methods,” *Gunton's Magazine*, September 1900, 261; Marion Hill, “The Star-Spangled Banner: Does it Get Weighed? Or Yet Wade?” *McClure's Magazine* 15, no. 3 (July 1900), 263; Woodrow Wilson, “Spurious Education Versus Real Education,” *The School Review* 7, no. 10, (December 1899), 603.

the curriculum that could help schoolchildren become exemplary citizens and even revitalize entire communities. This portrayal cast the teaching profession in a heroic light and provided incentive for teachers to promote a patriotic atmosphere in the classroom.

Two stories published in the *Youth's Companion* in 1895 help illustrate how literature cast patriotic education as beneficial to female teachers. In February of 1895, the magazine printed a story from author Annie Fellows-Johnston titled "Washington's Birthday at Hardyville" with the telling subtitle, "How a plucky little Teacher roused the People to Patriotism."¹⁴ The story begins with a heated argument between some of the townspeople. This argument, and the central conflict of the story, is that Schmidt, a German community member, refuses to let the town's new teacher, Miss Atworth, use the schoolhouse for a celebration of George Washington's birthday. Fellows-Johnston, who later wrote the well-known *Little Colonel* books, writes Schmidt's dialogue with a comically heavy German accent and presents his views as hostile to traditional American patriotic ideals.¹⁵ When one community member praises Miss Atworth's emphasis on patriotism and derides a former instructor's emphasis on dry facts and neglect of American civics, Schmidt responds, "Dat vas more good as learn 'em yoost foolishness – badriodism und der flag and all dot plab 'bout der country and der Union."¹⁶ Schmidt then claims that if the school holds this patriotic celebration of Washington he will remove his son Karl from school and instead put him to work on the family farm. When Atworth hears about Schmidt's intentions she expresses dismay. Karl's removal from school would

¹⁴ Annie Fellows-Johnston, "Washington's Birthday at Hardyville," *The Youth's Companion* 35, No. 35 (Feb 21, 1895), 86.

¹⁵ Fellows-Johnston wrote for forty years before her death in 1931. The *Little Colonel* series was particularly successful, and remains her most well known work in part because of the 1935 Shirley Temple film adaptation of the books. Reflecting on her success in its 1931 obituary, the *New York Times* recounted: "Because a child once underwent a major operation without an anesthetic after receiving the promise of a set of the 'Little Colonel' books, Mrs. Johnston often expressed the feeling that her work had been worth while. The child recovered." See "Annie F. Johnston, Author, Dies at 68," *New York Times*, Oct. 6, 1931, 25.

¹⁶ Fellows-Johnston, "Washington's Birthday at Hardyville," 86.

disrupt a crucial aspect of the evening's patriotic exercises, as Atworth planned for him to read a famous speech by Patrick Henry. Atworth then appeals to Schmidt directly to allow his son's participation and the use of the schoolhouse, with predictably successful results. Atworth's real triumph, however, occurs at the celebration of Washington's birthday. Karl, as Atworth had hoped, delivered a stirring reading of Henry's speech, causing the crowd to demand an encore. Karl then launched into a reading of the German story "Mein Vaterland." At the culmination of this reading, Karl turns and points to the prominently displayed portrait of George Washington and the American flag and exclaims "My Fatherland!"¹⁷ Karl's unexpected assertion of a distinctly American identity evinced that his teacher had promoted an atmosphere so patriotic even the son of a German immigrant hostile to American national values expressed his unwavering devotion to the nation. As described by Fellows-Johnston, the celebration then concluded with a speech by a Civil War veteran, who claimed, "that I fit [fought] for that flag, and yet, livin' here so long, and never seeing a celebration for young or old, I'd half forgot my patriotism. It's our school teacher has woke me up to seeing the truth."¹⁸ This story positions the teacher as a success in Americanizing her students, inspiring patriotism, and winning the endorsement of one of the town's military heroes.

A similar story published in the *Youth's Companion* just two months later titled "The Meanest Man in Plunkett" provided an additional example of how a teacher's position could be elevated through her devotion to patriotism. In this story, Miss Stanton, the town's teacher, is seeking donations to provide the school with a flag. In the story, Stanton successfully plays off the animosities of two of the community's richest members, Mr. Simpson and Mr. Blodgett, to procure the necessary funds to purchase the flag despite their initial resistance. Author Emily J.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Langley writes that, “all Plunkett was stirred with the news, marveling much that Plunkett was to possess the flag, but more that it should be the gift of two men whose mutual stinginess and animosity had become notorious!”¹⁹ As Langley later described, Simpson and Blodgett eventually reconcile their differences. This gesture inspired immense patriotism in the townspeople, as Blodgett and Simpson were Plunkett’s only remaining Civil War veterans. “The Meanest Man in Plunkett” concluded with a Memorial Day celebration where Simpson and Blodgett raise the flag together, and as Langley imagined, “it fluttered, and flung its glory to the welcoming breeze, while the children cheered with a will, and their elders softly, with something tugging at their throats.”²⁰ In both of these stories Civil War veterans play pivotal roles, displaying the centrality of the shared memory of battle to the surge in late-nineteenth century patriotic fervor. Most crucially, the teachers are presented as exemplary citizens who through their zeal for patriotic instruction enriched both the community and the schools. Stories like these suggest that many teachers promoted patriotic education as a way for themselves and other educators to earn additional respect, rather than simply having policymakers, reformers, and male administrators coerce them into adopting nationalistic ideologies and indoctrinating children accordingly.

In selling teachers the possibilities of embracing patriotic education, *The Youth’s Companion* also published success stories. One such account described a New York City contest among public schools to present the best “salute to the flag” and “original patriotic song.” Displaying the impressive assimilatory powers of patriotic education, six hundred Russian-born children won the contest. At the onset of their presentation, their superintendent said to them, “You are no longer Russians; you are Americans.” The students then gave a flag salute

¹⁹ Emily J. Langley, “The Meanest Man in Plunkett,” *The Youth’s Companion* 35, No. 49 (May 30, 1895), 263.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

proclaiming: “We, the children of many lands who find rest under thy folds, do pledge our lives, our hearts and our sacred honor to love and protect thee, our country and the liberty of the American people forever.”²¹ *The Youth’s Companion* also claimed the patriotic fervor in American schools drew the attention of other nations. In 1900, the magazine reported that pictures of students saluting the flag and reciting the “Pledge of Allegiance” in New York public schools garnered positive notices from foreign nations at a Paris Exposition. The Russian and New Zealand governments reportedly both sent requests for the photos to be displayed for their respective pedagogic societies. These examples of patriotic education’s efficacy reiterated the importance of this instruction to teachers.²²

Popular publications promised great success to teachers who went beyond expectations and cultivated an exceedingly patriotic environment. The teacher’s periodical *Primary Plans* included a telling advertisement in its September 1908 issue. This advertisement, from the Mail Order Flag Co. in Anderson, Indiana, offered teachers a free American flag for their schools. This advertisement implored teachers to “stimulate that patriotism that smoulders [sic] in the heart of every American-born child. Be patriotic. Don’t bother the board. Get credit for something yourself.” Adding nationalist flair to one’s classroom, the ad implied, would naturally arouse students’ patriotism and possibly benefit the teacher. To attain the free flag, however, teachers needed first to procure thirty-five flag buttons for their students to sell at ten cents apiece. The profits, then, would secure the flag. Upon receiving the flag, the company offered to “place you in a position to earn extra money by writing a few letters for us to other teachers.”²³ The company also offered pictures of Washington and Lincoln instead of a flag. Adorning their classrooms with portraits of these national heroes gave teachers new opportunities to both

²¹ “An Interesting Scene,” *The Youth’s Companion* 71, no. 7 (Feb 18, 1897), 78.

²² “Current Topics,” *The Youth’s Companion* 74, no. 43 (Oct 25, 1900), 524.

²³ Untitled advertisement (Mail Order Flag Co.), *Primary Plans* 6, no. 2 (September 1908), 38.

increase their status and inflate their students' sense of patriotism. That this company considered schoolteachers' desire for flags and pictures of presidents common enough to build a business around shows the extent of schools' demand for patriotic materials. The preponderance of advertisements like the one directly beside the Mail Order Flag Co.'s notice offering a solution for "superfluous hair on the face," meanwhile, leave no question of the gender of the majority of this journal's readership. While female teachers could potentially gain the respect of the school board and the general public by filling their classrooms with flags and pictures of past patriots, they still faced the looming threat of superfluous hair.²⁴

While many criticized teachers for not giving students a sufficiently thorough patriotic education, *The Youth's Companion* and other publications cast them as national heroes. In 1905, *The Youth's Companion* published a poem titled "The Flag Above the Schoolhouse Door." This poem's author, Harriet Crocker Le Roy, praised the hanging of American flags at schools across the nation and noted their presence "in cities and in villages, in county districts far and wide." Le Roy then informed children why this mattered: "What does it mean, O careless boy, O thoughtless girl at happy play? Red for the blood your fathers shed on some far off eventful day – White for the loyalty of countless women who forbore to mourn, but gave their all to save the flag above the schoolhouse door." Le Roy sought to remind "careless boys" and "thoughtless girls" of America's past military accomplishments and the sacrifices they required. At the same time, Le Roy lauded the efforts of women who earned their glory not on the battlefield, but rather, by saving "the flag above the schoolhouse door."²⁵

Framed in military terms, teachers' efforts seemed all the more heroic. "After all," noted *The Youth's Companion* in a 1904 article celebrating their movement to place flags in American

²⁴ Untitled advertisement, *Primary Plans* 6, no. 2 (September 1908), 38.

²⁵ Harriet Crocker Le Roy, "The Flag Above the Schoolhouse Door," *The Youth's Companion* 79, No. 6 (Feb 9, 1905), 68.

schools, “our real national defense is NATIONAL EDUCATION.”²⁶ While these perceived stakes of patriotic education placed teachers under increased scrutiny, it also allowed them a chance to transcend their gender and class identities and attain a status as vital members of society. Later, this same article reflected on the successes of patriotic education and the influence of teachers, noting, “a new generation of pupils has marched out from the schools into public life and a new generation has marched in during the past sixteen years.”²⁷ Their success inducing millions of children to march from their schools positioned teachers as vital members of the nation’s civic military force.

Publishing companies helped supplement teachers’ and schools’ enthusiasm for patriotic education, albeit at a cost. E.L. Kellogg and Co., a New York publishing company, produced several volumes of patriotic material intended for schools. Rather than solely compiling rituals for children, E.L. Kellogg and Co. printed numerous texts on educational methods, including John Dewey’s *My Pedagogic Creed*.²⁸ Alice M. Kellogg crafted several manuals containing patriotic celebrations and recitations for schoolchildren as part of the company’s “Brightening the Schoolroom Series.” Described by the publisher as an “exceedingly attractive and popular series,” these manuals contained instructions on how to properly observe George Washington’s birthday, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and a variety of other patriotic occasions in the schools.²⁹

Kellogg’s books emphasized the importance of teaching children patriotism while offering

²⁶ “How it Came About,” *The Youth’s Companion* 78, no. 4 (January 28, 1904), 50. Emphasis in original.

²⁷ *Ibid.* The conflation of national security and patriotic instruction led many to question whether or not the nation’s teaching force could adequately transmit this highly important message. For an example of teachers portrayed as overworked, but decidedly underprepared “martyrs,” see Lys D’Aimée, “The Menace of Present Educational Methods,” *Gunton’s Magazine*, September 1900, 261.

²⁸ John Dewey, *My Pedagogic Creed* (New York: E.L. Kellogg and Co., 1897). The company appears to have focused on educational texts both for primary and secondary schools, and published a long list of texts throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

²⁹ Alice M. Kellogg, ed., *Fancy Drills and Marches* (New York: E.L. Kellogg and Co., 1895), 4. See also Kellogg, *Lincoln the Patriot* (Philadelphia: Penn Publishing Co., 1897), or the company’s full page advertisement in the prescriptive teachers’ publication *Educational Foundations* titled “Best Books for Patriotic Days” containing a list of numerous Kellogg works including *Banner Days of the Republic* and *Flag Day in the School Room* “Best Books for Patriotic Days,” *Educational Foundations* 16 (1904-1905), 400.

detailed instructions on how to effectively create a patriotic atmosphere in the classroom. Furthermore, they reiterated the importance of Americanization, post-Civil War reunion, and militarism to patriotic thought at the turn of the twentieth century.

Patriotic educational materials emphasized the importance of militarism to children regardless of their gender. Although laws disallowed women from participating in military combat and gaining the heroic status equated with war, female and male students both participated in exercises lauding their nation's military. One of Kellogg's edited volumes, *Fancy Drills and Marches*, published in 1895, included a number of patriotic exercises for schoolchildren. *Fancy Drills* featured two flag drills involving both female and male students, as well as "The March of the Red, White, and Blue." This exercise, intended solely for girls, required any number of pupils divisible by three to don red, white, or blue gowns and what the author describes as "Puritan caps." The girls, divided by their gowns' respective colors, are then instructed to march into a variety of formations to the tune of "Yankee Doodle." At the culmination of the march, the girls then sing patriotic lyrics lauding, "the colors of our country's flag, in whose love we are sharing . . . we wear the colors of our flag, our country's pride and glory!"³⁰ As marches like this show, patriotic instruction targeted all students.

In celebrating the nation's martial culture and patriotic heroes, manuals often invoked the memory of the Civil War. This theme loomed large in Kellogg's volume titled *Patriotic Quotations Relating to American History*. This text contained over three hundred selections intended to inspire patriotism among schoolchildren, most of which related to past military heroes, battles, or more generally, the flag. Kellogg included several pieces devoted to Memorial Day and the Revolutionary War as well as entire sections devoted to George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Ulysses S. Grant. Tellingly, *Patriotic Quotations* included several poems

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.

emphasizing sectional reunion following the Civil War. One, titled simply “Reunion,” claimed that following the “thunder of cannons” and the “clashing of swords,” Union and Confederate soldiers merely engaged in “the clasping of friendly hands.”³¹ Another selection titled “The Blue and the Gray” opines, “Our anger is banished forever when are laurelled the graves of our dead . . . love and tears for the Blue, tears and love for the Gray.”³² Poems like these provided schoolchildren with an interpretation of the Civil War that downplayed slavery and emancipation and instead emphasized the shared interests of a reunited North and South. The ideologies of Civil War reunion and militarism received substantial backing in patriotic literature.³³

Prescriptive literature like this provided teachers with new material and introduced students to a bevy of patriotic writings and rituals. The militaristic, gendered, and racial nature of the era’s patriotic education was also present, however, in the textbooks that public schools used. One elementary history textbook, with the straightforward title *History Primer*, shows that many writers considered patriotism and American history inseparable. This 1906 text included an entire appendix full of patriotic songs and poems, all of them relating to either the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, or simply, the flag. The book also offered a chapter devoted to Betsy Ross and the American Flag, as well as an explanation of how schools should celebrate Flag Day.³⁴ A text titled *Pupils’ Outline Studies in the History of the United States* offered a similarly uncomplicated method of interpreting the nation’s past for students. Rather than recounting American history, this text simply asked that students draw national heroes and symbols. A supplement to traditional history books, *Pupils’ Outline Studies* included a section titled “Our

³¹ Julia C. R. Dorr, “Reunion,” in Alice M. Kellogg, ed., *Patriotic Quotations Relating to American History* (New York: E.L. Kellogg and Co., 1898), 51.

³² Francis M. Finch, “The Blue and the Gray,” in Kellogg, ed., *Patriotic Quotations*, 52.

³³ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 278-283.

³⁴ Oscar Gerson and Melvin Hix, *History Primer* (Philadelphia and New York: Hinds, Noble and Eldredge, 1906), 85-89, i-xiv.

Flag and its Defenders,” that asked students to draw pictures of the flag, a soldier, and a sailor. The section concluded with an invocation to “quote an appropriate sentiment in regard to the flag from ‘The Star-Spangled Banner’ or some patriotic speech.” A footnote, meanwhile, offered a suggestion for teachers that “a flag drill might be arranged for a closing school celebration.”³⁵ As these texts show, instilling love for the flag and reverence for the military held considerable importance in American schools.

High school history textbooks, although relatively dry and encyclopedic compared to their elementary counterparts, also gave students a celebratory interpretation of the nation’s past cast in militaristic and often racial terms. In the 1903 edition of Charles Kent Adams and William P. Trent’s *A History of the United States*, for instance, a chapter on the nation’s recent history emphasized the achievements of white American male heroes and the nation’s military. Adams, a longtime professor of history and president of the University of Wisconsin, and Trent, a professor of English at Columbia and a well-regarded historian of the South, had impressive credentials, but chose not to offer students an overly complicated version of the nation’s history.³⁶ Discussing the end of Reconstruction, the text told students that following the withdrawal of federal troops from the South: “everywhere the supremacy of the white people of the South was at once established. It was a practical confession that the methods of reconstruction adopted by Congress had not been successful.”³⁷ Indeed, as the book noted earlier, the main folly of Reconstruction was that “the negroes, although the most ignorant part

³⁵ Francis H. While, *Pupils’ Outline Studies in the History of the United States* (Cincinnati: American Book Company, 1895) 110-111.

³⁶ On William P. Trent’s career, see Wendell H. Stephenson, “William P. Trent as Historian of the South,” *Journal of Southern History* 15, no. 2 (May 1949), 151-177. Charles K. Adams, in addition to being president of the University of Wisconsin from 1892-1901, also served on the National Education Association’s Committee of Ten, which was the first national committee to recommend curricula for all high school subjects, as noted in Gary B. Nash, “Creating Standards in United States and World History,” *OAH Magazine of History* 9, no. 3 (Spring 1995), 3.

³⁷ Charles Kent Adams and William P. Trent, *A History of the United States* (Allyn and Bacon’s Series of School Histories; Boston and Chicago: Allyn and Bacon, 1903), 474

of the population, were in control of the Southern legislatures, and their legislation was, as a rule, very crude and unwise.”³⁸ This textbook agreed with the prevailing sentiments of Civil War reunionists throughout the country who stressed the unity of nation’s white citizens to the detriment of southern blacks.³⁹

A History of the United States also celebrated American involvement in Cuba and the Philippines at the turn of the twentieth century. Describing the public fervor surrounding the war, the text noted that “flags suddenly flew out from the public buildings and schoolhouses in all parts of the land. In theaters and cafés audiences cheered and sprang to their feet whenever the flag was displayed or the ‘Star Spangled Banner’ was sung. The nation throbbed with an indignant enthusiasm.”⁴⁰ The text also lauded the actions of troops in the Philippines. Addressing the controversial use of a torture known as “water cure” by American soldiers, the authors offered the following assessment: “It seems clear that although there has been among the American troops some of that demoralization which always shows itself when war is conducted in tropical countries and against weaker races, but the great mass of the American forces in the Philippines have performed their duties satisfactorily.”⁴¹ High school students across the nation learned to interpret their nation’s foreign engagements in a way that emphasized America’s superior moral and racial character.⁴²

A 1913 edition of another popular high school history textbook, *Barnes’s School History of the United States*, cast American history in a similar light. This text began with a telling quote

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 460

³⁹ Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 1-5.

⁴⁰ Adams and Trent, *A History of the United States*, 517

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 526.

⁴² As this quote indicates, Americans increasingly felt that the war in the Philippines was demoralizing, and that prolonged contact with these “weaker races” would be a degrading experience for American troops. For an in-depth look at these notions, see Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood*, 180-198.

from the original 1871 edition by one of the authors, Joel Dorman Steele.⁴³ Steele, an educator and author of multiple textbooks from New York, wrote:

This work is offered to American youth in the confident belief that as they study the wonderful history of their native land . . . Their patriotism must be kindled when they come to see how slowly, yet how gloriously, this tree of liberty has grown, what storms have wrenched its boughs, what sweat of toil and blood has moistened its roots, what eager eyes have watched every out-springing bud, what brave hearts have defended it, loving it even unto death. A heritage thus sanctified by the heroism and devotion of the fathers can not but elicit the choicest care and tenderest love of the sons.⁴⁴

This dedication, invoking the nation's martial tradition in glorifying its founders, portrayed the United States as a product and future responsibility of "fathers" and "sons," respectively.

Unsurprisingly, then, the text cast the nation's history as a story rife with white, male, and largely military, heroes. The textbook offered a similarly narrow portrait of the nation's racial and religious character. As the authors argued of the nation's Native American population: "It is earnestly to be hoped that all the red men may yet be Christianized and taught the arts of industry and peace."⁴⁵ To students, sentiments like this appeared as standard aspects of American history. Indeed, high school history sought to influence how students viewed the rest of the world. As *Barnes's School History* told them: "Popular education has made us a peculiarly enlightened nation, and statistics prove that 'our people read twice as much as all the rest of the world who read at all.'"⁴⁶ In the early twentieth century, notions like these filled the nation's textbooks and helped create a culture in schools that emphasized American exceptionalism.

⁴³ Review of *Joel Dorman Steele* by Ms. George Archibald, *New York Times Book Review*, September 8, 1900, 11. Steele has a professorship at Syracuse University named in his honor.

⁴⁴ Joel Dorman Steele and Esther Baker Steele, *Barnes's School History of the United States* (New York, Cincinnati, and Chicago: American Book Company, 1913), 6.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 367.

One author, retired banker turned history enthusiast Charles Altschul, critiqued the inclusion of exceptionalist attitudes in school textbooks.⁴⁷ Altschul's book, *The American Revolution in Our School Text-Books*, examined why Americans continued to harbor animosity toward the British, and largely blamed high school textbooks. As James T. Shotwell, a professor of history at Columbia University, explained in the book's introduction, "the text-books in history have more common been the product of a very limited knowledge . . . they have, for the most part, persisted in perpetuating ancient, uncriticized traditions which have accumulated since the events themselves."⁴⁸ This text analyzed interpretations of the Revolutionary War from fifty textbooks used in the nation's public schools, having respondents from a number of American cities list which textbooks they used. Among the textbooks Altschul examined were *A Student's History of the United States* and *A History of the United States for Schools*. Both of these texts included characteristic yet telling selections that suggest how students' views toward their nation developed in the years preceding World War I.

In the 1913 edition of Harvard Professor Edward Channing's *A Student History of the United States*, students learned of Americans' particular racial characteristics.⁴⁹ This text claimed that the continental United States "is fitted for varied occupations, which give the best results in the growth of a race."⁵⁰ The text also claimed that due to "the effect of this environment on the physical body . . . one must admit that the European race has gained by its transfer from its

⁴⁷ Altschul, following stints as the president of the California Bankers' Association and a member of the New York banking firm Lazard Freres, retired in 1916 to pursue historical research and writing. This publication, and a pamphlet titled "German Militarism and Its German Critics," published by the Committee on Public Information during World War I, were his most notable publications. See: "Charles Altschul, Retired Banker, Dies," *New York Times*, April 28, 1927, 23.

⁴⁸ James T. Shotwell, "Introduction," in Charles Altschul, *The American Revolution in Our School Text-Books: An Attempt to Trace the Influence of Early School Education on the Feeling Towards England in the United States* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1917), v.

⁴⁹ For an examination of the roots of this kind of racialist thinking, see Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 79-158. Also illustrative of these exceptionalist ideologies is David Wrobel, *The End of American Exceptionalism: Frontier Anxiety from the Old West to the New Deal* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 85-95.

⁵⁰ Edward Channing, *A Student's History of the United States* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1913), 11.

ancient home to the soil of the United States.”⁵¹ Laden with romantic and racist interpretations of American history, Channing’s textbook was one of the nation’s best selling and remained a staple in schools for decades following its initial release.⁵² Wilbur Fisk Gordy’s textbook *A History of the United States for Schools*, meanwhile, informed students that “man dominating his physical and social surroundings is the central fact of history.”⁵³ When discussing “Conditions and Problems of the Present,” at the textbook’s end, Gordy, the superintendent of schools in Springfield, Massachusetts, offered a frank description of students’ appropriate relationship to the nation. “The greatness of a country,” students learned, is measured “by what its people are. If they are intelligent and patriotic, ready at all times to do their duty in the interest of the public good, their future is assured.”⁵⁴ The text concluded with a quote from Charles Sumner explaining what the elements of the American flag symbolized, and a reprinting of the “Pledge of Allegiance.” Then, under a section titled “To the Pupil,” Gordy asked students both to “name the natural advantages of the U.S.,” and “before laying aside the study of this history learn the symbolism . . . of the colors of the ‘Stars and Stripes,’ and memorize the ‘pledge.’”⁵⁵ In the early-twentieth century, these celebratory notions of nationalism remained common in the nation’s schools. The rhetorical bluster of patriots in the late-nineteenth century may have receded following the Spanish-American War, but this patriotic culture remained an important part of students’ education.⁵⁶

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵² Channing was a longtime professor at Harvard, and this six-volume history was extremely well regarded upon its release. Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 48-49, 81.

⁵³ Wilbur Fisk Gordy, *A History of the United States for Schools* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1914), x.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 461.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 462.

⁵⁶ Historians commonly note that this sort of nationalism receded in this interwar period or that it played less of a role in national discourse. Often, scholars depict these notions as reappearing as a result of World War I, or they give this period less attention. See Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 334; O’Leary, *To Die For*, 172-193.

Popular publications, educational manuals, and textbooks offered teachers and students a standardized and often incentivized patriotic curriculum. These materials helped establish the contours of a patriotic culture that became ubiquitous in American schools. Indeed, a veritable army marched out of the nation's public schools in the decades preceding World War I. Rather than solely being the product of elite white male manipulation, however, middle- and working-class female teachers played key roles in inculcating the patriotic ideals these citizens often vehemently expressed during World War I. As a result, materials targeting teachers held the same importance as those intending to arouse children's patriotism. Although state laws and national restrictions during World War I helped entrench ideals of militaristic nationalism in schools, this lasting shift necessitated the creation of rituals, lesson plans, and patriotic celebrations, as well as the cooperation of teachers. The transformative results of this movement display both the efficacy of patriotic reformers in the Progressive Era and the profound social influence of schoolteachers. Patriotism — in the form of flags, the celebration of nationalistic holidays, and an emphasis on military achievements — thrived in American public schools long after the initial efforts of reformers in the 1890s. Millions of schoolchildren entered the nation's schools in this period, and many emerged with a strong knowledge of patriotic symbols, rituals, and above all, responsibilities.

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